

Message Text

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FOR LOSDEL

FOLLOWING REPEAT MOSCOW 13303 ACTION SECSTATE INFO BONN GENEVA
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QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 13303

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PLOS PL UR GR NO IN

SUBJ: NEW SOVIET STRESS ON FREEDOM OF PASSAGE?

REFS: A) ATHENS 8744; B) MOSCOW 11298; C) MOSCOW 9807

BEGIN SUMMARY. ACCUMULATING EVIDENCE FROM SOVIET DEALINGS
WITH GREEKS, POLES AND INDIANS SUGGESTS NEW SOVIET STRESS ON
FREE PASSAGE ACROSS SPECTRUM OF MARITIME NEGOTIATIONS,
REINFORCING STANDARD SOVIET POSITION IN LOS, AND GOING BEYOND
SENSITIVITY TO SEGEAN NAVIATION IN WAKE OF KIEV DARDANELLES
PASSAGE. WHILE THIS MAY BE NATURAL REFLECTION OF SOVIET
EMERGENCE AS GLOBAL NAVAL POWER, IT WILL ALSO EMBROIL
SOVIETS WITH RIPARIAN STATES MORE THAN IN PAST. AND, WHILE
WE LACK SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO SOVIET APPROACH TO SVALBARD,
WE SUSPECT IT WILL ALSO REINFORCE STRATEGIC FACTOR (AS
COMPARED WITH ECONOMIC) IN SOVIET APPROACH TO THESE
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NEGOTIATIONS WITH NORWAY. END SUMMARY.

1. WE ARE STRUCK BY PRIVATE EVIDENCE ACCUMULATING IN RECENT MONTHS FOR MAJOR INCREASE IN SOVIET PREOCCUPATION WITH FREEDOM OF PASSAGE ON HIGH SEAS. DEMARCHES TO GREEKS REPORTED IN ATHENS 8744, OR RATHER WILLINGNESS TO OFFEND GREEK SENSITIVITIES IN THE INTEREST OF FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION IN THE AEGEAN, IS ONLY LATEST PIECE.

2. ON AUG 11, POLISH FIRST SECRETARY HERE (IN CONTEXT OF EFFORT TO DEMONSTRATE TO EMBOFF THAT THERE WERE DIFFERENCES IN POLISH AND SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY APPROACHES, EVEN IF THEY DO NOT APPEAR ON THE SURFACE OF THE TWO COUNTRIES' "COORDINATED" FOREIGN POLICIES) SAID RECENT POLISH-SOVIET DISCUSSIONS OF MARITIME MATTERS HAD MADE PERFECTLY CLEAR THAT THE SOVIETS ARE ALMOST SOLELY CONCERNED WITH FREEDOM OF PASSAGE, WHEREAS THE POLES ARE ALMOST SOLELY CONCERNED WITH FISHING RIGHTS.

3. FIRST TEETALE SIGN WE SAW THIS SUMMER WAS BEHIND-THE-SCENES FUMBLING OVER TREATMENT OF INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE DURING MRS. GANDHI'S VISIT IN JUNE, AS REPORTED MOSCOW 9807: IN UPSHOT, SOVIETS REITERATED 1973 BLESSING FOR ZONE OF PEACE CONCEPT, BUT INSERTED PHRASE "IN CONFORMITY WITH GENERALLY RECOGNIZED PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW" INTO SOVIET-INDIAN DECLARATION IN ORDER TO SAFEGUARD FREEDOM OF PASSAGE POSITION IN LOS NEGOTIATIONS. SUBSEQUENTLY, USA INSTITUTE NAVAL TYPES MADE SOVIET ATTACHMENT TO FREE PASSAGE THE MAIN FOCUS OF COMMENTS ON INDIAN OCEAN (MOSCOW 11298).

4. COMMENT. FREE PASSAGE OF ALL VESSELS IS OF COURSE STANDARD SOVIET LOS POSITION, AND DARDANELLES PASSAGE OF KIEV MAY HELP EXPLAIN SPECIAL ATTENTION TO AEGEAN NAVIGATION. WHAT IS STRIKING, THEREFORE, IS NOT SOVIET POSITION IN GENERAL OR IN SPECIFIC INSTANCE, BUT ACCUMULATION OF INDICATORS THAT CONCERN OVER FREEDOM OF PASSAGE IS BECOMING A REFERENCE POINT FOR SOVIET ATTITUDES IN WIDE VARIETY OF CASES. PERHAPS THIS EVOLUTION IS ONLY NATURAL CONCOMITANT OF SOVIET EMERGENCE AS GLOBAL NAVAL POWER, BUT IT IS ALSO LIKELY TO DRAW THE USSR INTO UNACCUSTOMED SQUABBLES WITH RIPARIAN STATES LIKE GREECE. AND, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO SPECIAL
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EXPERTISE ON SOVIET APPROACH TO SVALBARD, AND LITTLE ACCESS TO REAL SOVIET PERCEPTIONS, WE SUSPECT THIS NEW CONCENTRATION ON FREE PASSAGE ISSUE WILL REINFORCE STRATEGIC ELEMENT (AS COMAPRED, SAY, WITH ECONOMIC) AS DOMINANT FACTOR IN DETERMINING THE WAY SOVIETS HANDLE THESE NEGOTIATIONS, AS WELL AS LOS.
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